

The CIA Man's Formula For Smothering Science

By DANIEL S. GREENBERG

WASHINGTON — Are the Soviets really dipping into this country's vast output of scientific and technical knowledge?

No question about it — indeed they are. But there is a serious question concerning what we should do about it. A resolution of that question is becoming more urgent as senior defense and intelligence chiefs intensify demands for important segments of American science to curtain themselves off from prying eyes. If science doesn't voluntarily censor itself, Admiral Bobby R. Inman, deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, warned last week, its traditional resistance to "regulation of any kind" will be "wiped away by a tidal wave" of public and congressional concern.

When it comes to pressuring science into trimming its ancient practice of unrestricted communication, the admiral already has a historic scalp in his belt. For it was under his prodding, while he headed the super-

secret National Security Agency, that university-based computer scientists agreed to a voluntary system of government prepublication review of research papers of possible value for making and breaking codes. That reluctantly taken step, even with its voluntary feature, represented an unprecedented surrender in the peacetime history of our scientific community. Now Admiral Inman and his national security colleagues, backed by approving statements from the White House, want to extend the principle of voluntary collaboration to most, if not all, of American science and technology. Is that a good idea?

To the tunnel-visioned bureaucrats of national security, it's obviously a splendid idea. But their embrace of it reflects a medieval grasp of the workings of 20th century science and technology — so much so, that it is reminiscent of perpetual-motion engineering, leech medical therapy, and alchemy.